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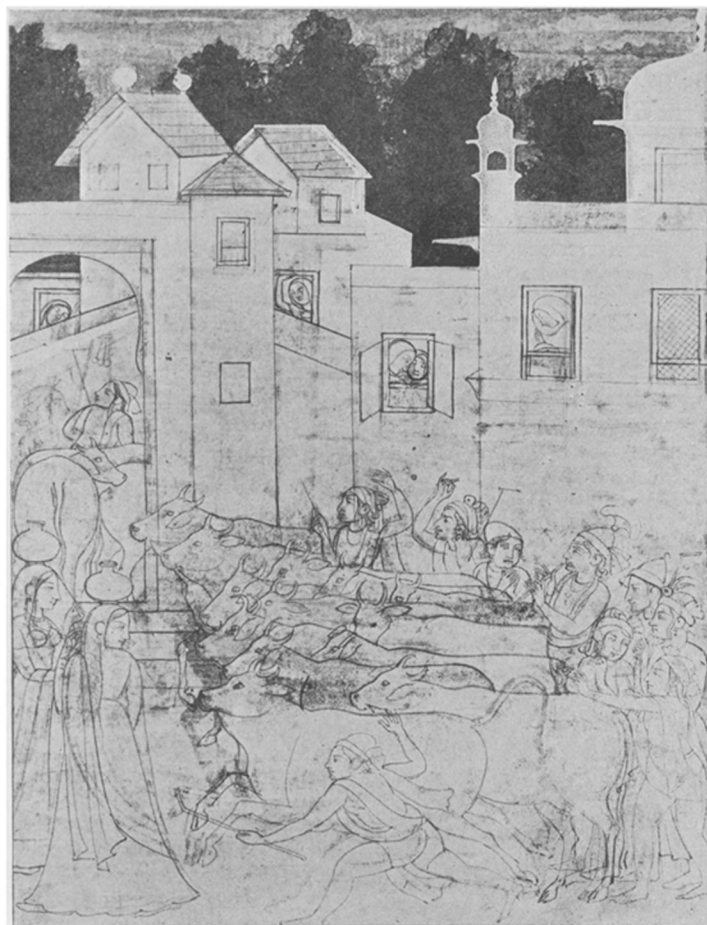


Fig. 1. "Cowdust" *Pahari, Kangra, eighteenth century, unfinished*
Ross-Coomaraswamy Collection

RAJPUT PAINTING

I. Introduction

WHILE Mughal painting, as pointed out in a previous number of the Bulletin,* represents merely a brilliant episode in the history of Indian art, and, in its realistic and secular preoccupations and personal interests, is remote from Hindu feeling, the painting known as Rajput, that is to say, the essentially Hindu art of Rajputana and the Panjab Himalayas, had deep roots in the permanent ground of epic tradition, devotional faiths and the common life.

The tradition of Indian painting, illustrated by extant examples, covers a period of over two thousand years, and even this does not by any means take us back to its real beginnings. In the actual record there are many gaps, the greatest hiatus extending from the art of Ajanta (seventh century A. D.) to the Jaina manuscripts of the fifteenth century, which are the earliest known Indian paintings on paper; this interval is bridged only by a few Buddhist paintings, mainly in manuscripts from

Nepal, and a few frescoes in Ceylon. There is not, however, the least doubt that the art was continuously practiced — on a large scale upon plastered walls, and on a small scale on wooden panels and on cotton cloth, afterwards also on paper. It is precisely in Rajputana and the Himalayas — comparatively inaccessible to Mughal domination, and even to this day intensely conservative — that the older traditions of painting best survived, not only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but even up to the end of the eighteenth century, comparatively little affected by the Persian and European influences which enter so largely into the art of the Mughal courts.

An absolute continuity of subject matter is not, of course, to be expected, for we must take into account the decline of Buddhism, which provided the themes for all the painting of Ajanta. But the subjects taken from the epics, and many of the Vaishnava and Saiva themes are identical with those of the lost paintings of a thousand years earlier, the former existence of which is indicated in the

* No. 93, for January, 1918.

literature, or paralleled in still extant sculpture. The actual themes of Rajput painting will be dealt with at greater length in subsequent articles. It may be remarked here, however, that Rajput painting is both essentially and formally religious. It interprets every experience of human life in the sense of a spiritual drama. It is an art of ideas and of feeling: and in this respect it contrasts most markedly with the work of Persian and Mughal artists, which is almost exclusively preoccupied with secular themes, and in the latter case, with portraiture.

There exists, moreover, the closest relationship between the Rajput paintings and the contemporary vernacular poetry (in Hindi): and while in a few cases the works deriving from the epics, and those of a conspicuously hieratic type, are inscribed with the Sanskrit texts they illustrate, in many more cases, — particularly in illustrations of *Ragmalas*, the *Eight Nayakas*, and other stock subjects — the back of the picture, sometimes the picture itself, carries the corresponding Hindi inscription. The pictures should not on this account be regarded as belonging to illustrated manuscripts or as book illustrations in the Persian sense: they are rather portfolio pictures, often indeed painted in series of a considerable number dealing with one theme, but not to be described or catalogued as manuscripts. Those which are not directly executed on walls, but on paper on a small scale, would usually be wrapped in a cotton cover and stored in a box: these pictures are intended to be held in the hand, and not for hanging in frames upon walls.

The names of the artists are almost unknown, and the paintings are only in the rarest instances signed or dated; the Museum possesses one Rajasthani example signed by the painter Natthu, and dated Samvat 1751 (1694 A. D.).

The technique employed is closely related to that of ancient and modern Indian "fresco," which is actually a process of tempera painting rather than pure fresco. In any case, the painter, whether on a wall or on paper, makes a preliminary sketch, usually in red, or transfers an already prepared design, pricked with holes for use as a stencil, by pouncing. These outlines, forming the underdrawing which in the finished work alone marks the original surface, are then overlaid with a thin white priming, through which they show faintly. Very often the hand-made paper employed has a rough surface, but the better sorts are "burnished like glass" before the painter sets to work on them. In any case, however, the white priming affords a very smooth surface for the finer brush outline with which the artist now redraws the whole composition, often correcting or departing more or less widely from the original lines. When everything has been drawn that is to appear in the finished picture, the coloring is begun: first the background, then the buildings, and always last of all, the human or animal figures. A high proportion of Pahari drawings is met with in the unfinished state, either entirely uncolored, or with the background colored, leaving the figures still in

outline, and works in this state have remarkable charm: a good example (Pahari, Kangra, eighteenth century) is illustrated in the accompanying figure (1), representing the Hour of Cowdust.

This unfinished work, together with those of an earlier date reproduced in the following pages, exhibits the salient characteristics of the Rajput style. It is essentially an art of outlines like the painting of a Greek vase: its affinities are with Ajanta, with Early Asiatic and the Ægean, rather than with the contemporary Mughal art of representation. Free strokes of the brush with astonishing mastery carry down in a single movement the lines of drapery flowing from head to foot, outline the features, or follow the whole contour of the body — and by contrast with this and with the pure and brilliant color which fills the spaces thus delimited, Mughal painting is almost to be described as an art of stippling. When the Rajput drawing is enlarged by projection to many times its original size it exhibits without any loss of intimacy a boldness and a simplicity which mark its derivation from a school of mural decoration, and show the identity of style which subsists as between the smallest Rajput work and the large, almost life-size cartoons, which in the eighteenth century were still prepared for use in the decoration of wall surfaces.

The surviving Rajput paintings range in date from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Geographically they are divided as Rajasthani (from Rajputana) and Pahari (from the Panjab hills). In the sixteenth century there is not a marked divergence of style between these areas: the consolidation of the Mughal empire, however, gradually divided the Rajputs of the hills from those of the plains more and more effectively, and in the hills particularly Rajput painting pursues a somewhat independent course, maintaining a high degree of excellence up to the close of the eighteenth century. At the same time Mughal influences can be recognized in much of the later work, especially the Pahari and Sikh portraiture, and in a modification of the strong colors of the primitives. Scarcely anything of importance has been produced since 1825. The principal centre of the Rajasthani work, it should be mentioned, has been at Jaipur: of Pahari production, in Jammu (a provincial style, rather exaggerated in its physical types and hot in color) and Kangra (a very cultivated school, dainty alike in drawing and color). With the Kangra group are to be classed the late productions of Garhwal, of which some are attributed to a painter by the name of Mola Ram, who died in 1833.

II. The Musical Modes

A favorite subject of Rajasthani painters is a set of illustrations to the thirty-six Ragas and Raginis, forming a *Ragmala*, a designation which applies in the first instance to a "garland" of poems describing the Ragas and Raginis; and these poems are often inscribed upon the actual

Fig. 2. *Madhu-Madhavi Ragini*

Ross Collection

Rajasthani, sixteenth century

pictures. Broadly speaking, the Raga is equivalent to the musical mode of European and particularly of old Greek and ecclesiastical terminology, inasmuch as it represents a selection of not more than seven notes, ranging over the scale and never departed from in any one song or composition; but the Raga is actually somewhat further determined by characteristic progressions, and is more accurately translated by "melody-mould." The Ragini is merely an abridgment or modification of a Raga. The *Ragmala* usually describes six Ragas, each with five Raginis. It may be added that the Ragas and Raginis are personified as musical angels with family relationships, and these musical genii are implicitly, if not explicitly, invoked by the artist at every performance.

The most important fact to be observed in studying the *Ragmala* pictures is that, precisely as the old Greek mode was felt to possess a characteristic and definite *ethos*, so from the Indian point of view the Raga is expressed and recognized as clearly in and by its mood as by the strictly musical definition. Each Raga and Ragini is associated with a particular hour of the day or night and with particular seasons or phenomena; there are modes and moods of noon and midnight, of the spring and of the autumn rains. Most of these moods are connected with love, in the various phases of experience recognized by Hindu rhetoric, with more or less mystical implications. It will be readily apparent from all this that, without of course adding anything to the music as such, a picture may embody the same mood that the music expresses and so in a sense interpret the music to those who are not primarily musical; and this interpretation is assisted by the representation of the characteristic associations of the hour or the weather and the relationships of the human actors. But though the modern student may avail himself of the pictures in this way as the concert-goer reads his program, it was not for this purpose they were designed. Where they were made an understanding—a musical understanding, that is—of the music was taken for granted. We can only say that these modes or moods, in whichever way we regard them, were favorite themes in Rajput painting, particularly in the Rajasthani group, and form the subject for many of the finest works. Amongst Pahari paintings they occur only in the Jammu group, and Kangra does not afford a single example. Those from Jammu generally illustrate *Ragmalas* with more than thirty-six members, and are briefly inscribed in Takri characters without the quotation of whole verses.

The two Raginis reproduced in Figs. 2 and 3 are amongst the most important of the Rajput paintings in the Museum. Equally in drawing and tender color they are adequate to the ideas intended to be expressed, and characteristically Indian.

The first is Madhu-Madhavi ("Honey Flower"). A lady with her maids stands in the palace garden

feeding a peacock: the sky is heavily overcast. According to the poem superscribed a beautiful woman has come from the palace and stands in the garden: "Heavy black clouds are gathering auspiciously, the sweet, sweet rumbling of thunder is heard, and flashes of lightning light up the sky. . . . Eagerly she waits for her beloved, with her body like an open flower, and because she thinks of her lord's embrace there is joy in her heart."

The second, by the same hand and from the same series, is Ragini Vibhasa ("Brilliance" or "Splendor"), and represents Kamadeva (the Indian Eros) fitting an arrow to his bow, which he aims at his wife Rati, the Indian Psyche, who is sleeping on the palace terrace. The theme is the "Return of Love" with the coming of the rains. According to the Hindi poem superscribed, "The monsoon clouds have brought in desire, and their glory has filled the eye. Love has set an arrow to his bow, and Delight is considering the battle in her heart. . . . Hearing all the tale unfolded by Love, she gazed with swimming eyes, and from head to foot she was filled with longing."

Another group of early Rajasthani *Ragmala* pictures in the Museum collection includes fifteen examples by one hand and from one series. These are distinguished alike by very brilliant coloring and by daring draughtsmanship. Here the *esprit* of Indian rhetoric finds a vigorous and powerful expression, not only without any sentimentality, but with a savage and daring force that is clearly distinguishable from the tenderness which is so characteristic of much of the later Rajput art of the hills.

These sixteenth century Rajasthani Raginis possess an importance quite apart from that of their theme or emotional content and decorative charm. They represent the primitives of Rajput painting as we know it, and throw a light on the origins of the technique, which, so far as the drawing goes, it has already been pointed out very closely repeats the methods of classic Indian painting at Ajanta. The dominant colors are red, yellow, black, and dark green, and this tonality is strongly reminiscent of the rather hot coloring of much of the work at Ajanta. Everything is in the highest degree conventionalized, and there is not the least research of verisimilitude, and only the slightest traces of modelling. On the whole these early Raginis are to be regarded as the most important, and with the exception of the large cartoons, as by far the purest in idiom of all Rajput productions. If it were possible to make use of the term decadence without disparagement, one might say that we see here examples of the decadence of Ajanta painting after a thousand years; but these are rather brilliant *rétradataires* than decadents—they combine extreme conventionality with an almost disconcerting vitality. Their summary methods are carried even further in the circular playing cards* which are still,

* *Rajput Painting*, Pl. LXXXVI, a and b.

Fig. 3. *Vithasa Ragini*

Ross Collection

Rajasthani, sixteenth century

Fig. 4. *Todi Ragini**Rajasthani, sixteenth century*

Ross-Coomaraswamy Collection

I believe, made in Rajputana, and in the illustrations accompanying a royal horoscope, — that of a Maharaja of Bikanir (Sri Ratan Singh Bahadur), dated equivalent to 1838 A.D., — in the Museum collection. There the stylization is carried to the furthest conceivable limit, and no more summary formulæ for human features could be imagined; but even there there is no loss of vigor.

Of the five illustrations accompanying these notes, Ragini Todi, a day scene, shows a woman with a *vina*, standing in a grove of trees: a black buck and a fawn are attracted by the music (this is often made a symbol of the soul of man ensnared by the pleasures of love), and the buck is eating grass from the woman's hand (Fig. 4). Ragini Kedara ("from Kedar," in the Himalayas), a night scene, shows an ascetic seated on a deerskin at the door of his cell, listening to a male musician who is playing the *vina*: here the architecture, reminiscent of *vihara* construction, is especially characteristic and interesting (Fig. 5). Ragini Patamanjari, a night scene, shows the heroine seated in conversation with the messenger, who is doubtless pleading the lover's cause (Fig. 6). Ragini Lalita, "amorous," a day scene, shows the hero, with a somewhat truculent expression, hastening home to his sleeping lady (Fig. 7).

It will be noticed that in all cases the sky is dark by convention; where night scenes are represented the darkness of the sky extends to the foreground; in day scenes it is limited by the horizon. In many of the pictures there is representation of heavy clouds with lightning and falling rain.

The Museum also possesses four Rajasthani Raga pictures from one hand and series of the seventeenth century, similar in style to the two examples first referred to in this article, though not so fine, and similar to those in the British Museum MS., Or. 2821. Some of the pictures in this series are of special interest on account of their sympathetic and distinguished rendering of Rajput civil architecture: this is true of the example illustrated in Fig. 8, showing a lady performing *Brahma Puja*, and representing Khambavati or Khamaj Ragini. The Museum possesses another seventeenth century example of the same Ragini represented in the same manner. A picture of Ragini Asavari shows as usual a lady seated playing the *bin* or *nagasara*, with many cobras attracted by the music, deserting the sandal trees, their favorite haunt, and as the inscribed poem remarks, "writhing and fawning" on the musician.

Two other pictures from another series, by

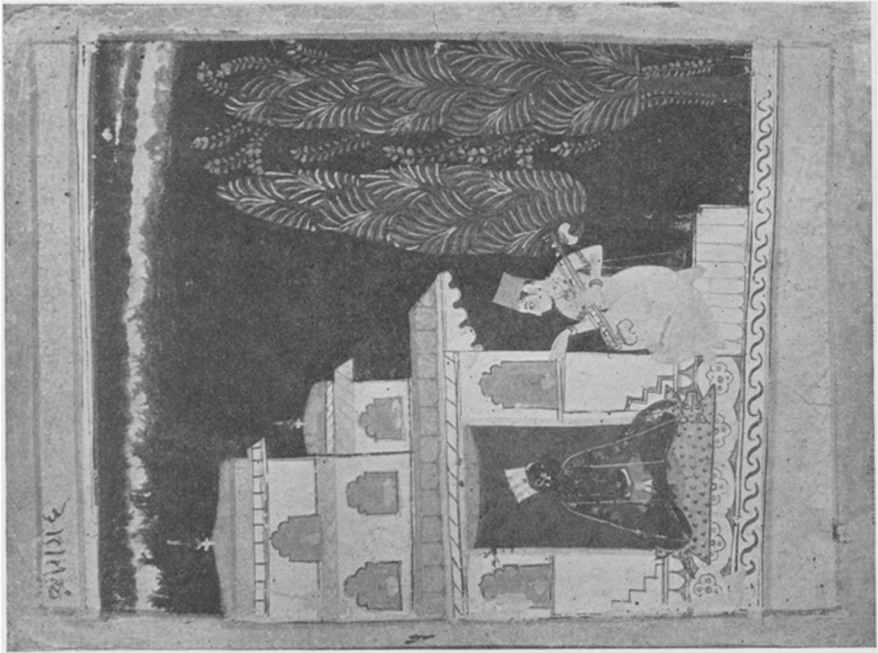


Fig. 5. Kedara Ragini

Rajasthani, sixteenth century

Ross-Coomaraswamy Collection

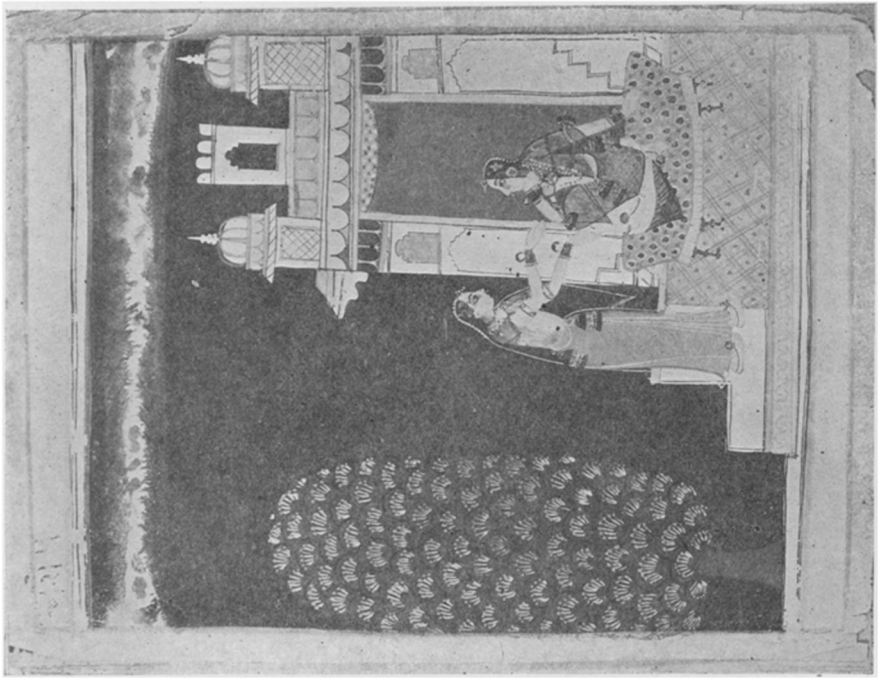


Fig. 6. Patamanyari Ragini

Rajasthani, sixteenth century

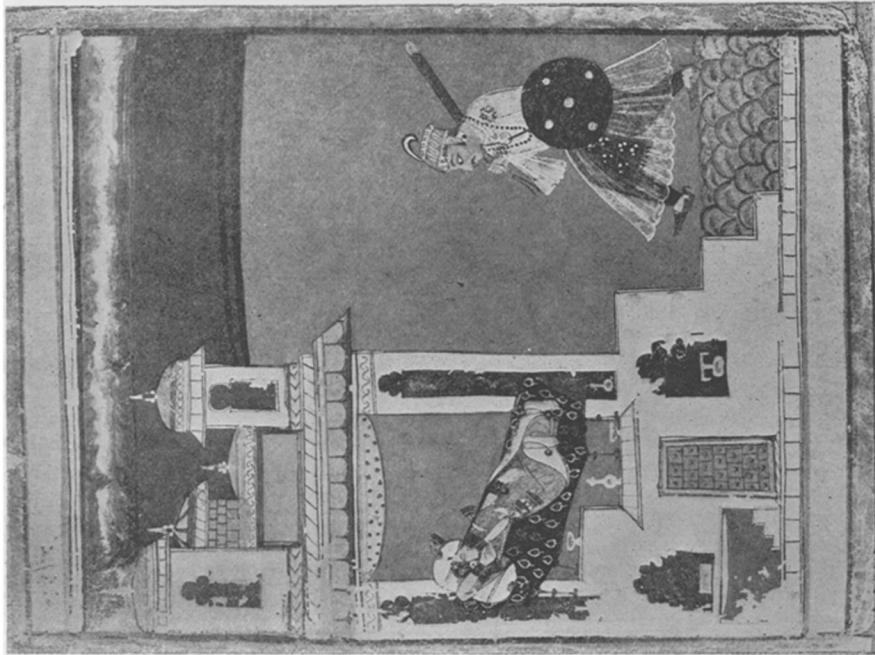


Fig. 7. *Lalita Ragini*

Rajasthani, sixteenth century

Ross-Coomaraswamy Collection

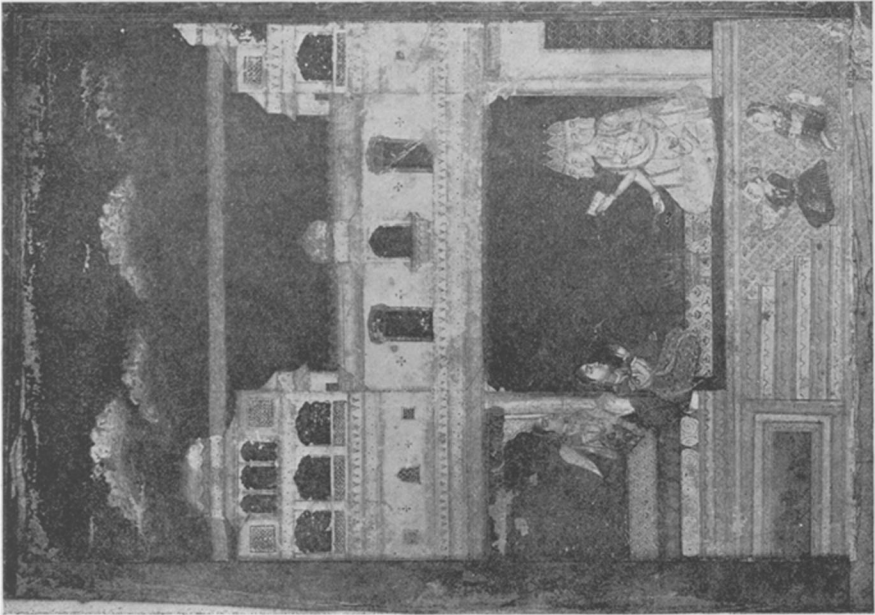


Fig. 8. *Khamaj Ragini*

Rajasthani, seventeenth century

Fig. 9. *Gujari Ragini**Pahari, Jammu, eighteenth century*

Ross-Coomaraswamy Collection

another hand, represent Bhairava Raga and Varari Ragini; these exhibit a very unusual color scheme in which deep blue predominates and gold is conspicuous, and are to be regarded as Mughal rather than Rajput paintings. The architecture is represented as decorated with color, in the manner very usual in Mughal building, especially in the time of Shah Jahan. These two examples, by exception, have short inscriptions in Persian characters.

Raga pictures from Jammu exhibit the usual characteristics of this provincial school. Ragini Gujari is represented by a woman seated in a field fondling two black bucks, while another woman is playing the *vina* (Fig. 9). The motif is here not very different from that of Todi Ragini in the Rajasthani example. The inscription speaks of Gujari Ragini as the wife of Dipak Raga. Another example illustrates a Raga not identified but related to Dipak (the mode of "Fire"), and shows a male figure with three flaming heads and four arms riding on a white elephant.

Certain of the Raga subjects are occasionally adopted by Mughal painters and used as picturesque motifs rather than to express those general ideas which are characteristic of Rajput art. A

Mughal example of this kind, based on an original Rajput representation of Ragini Todi is illustrated in Fig. 10, while another, based on Bhairavi, representing Sivapuja — ladies worshipping the *Lingam* at a Saiva shrine at night — is shown in Fig. 11.

III. The School of Jammu

Jammu is one of the largest of the northern group of Himalayan Rajput hill states, and gives its name to a provincial school of Pahari painting which even in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries preserves to a large degree the hot color and forcible drawing which we have remarked to be characteristic of the sixteenth century Rajasthani primitives. With Jammu are to be associated Basoli, Kishtwar, Chamba and other kingdoms of independent Rajput chiefs lying outside the main areas of Mughal influence.

Of this school the Museum possesses important examples in a series of unusually large paintings and drawings on paper, illustrating episodes of the siege of Lanka as related in the *Lankākandam* of the *Ramayana*. The story of the *Ramayana*, one of the two great epics of India, may be briefly recapitulated. Rama, as an avatar of Vishnu, took birth

Fig. 10. *Todi Ragini* Mughal, seventeenth centuryFig. 11. *Sivapuja (Bhairavi Ragini)* Mughal, seventeenth century

Golubew Collection

as the son of Dasaratha of Ayodhya, in order to accomplish the destruction of the demon king of Lanka, Ravana. Rama's three brothers were Lakshmana, Bharata, and Satrugna. He married Sita, daughter of Janaka. By the intrigues of his mother-in-law he was banished for fourteen years, his brother Bharata meanwhile acting as regent. Sita and Lakshmana accompanied him in exile, and these three led an idyllic life amongst the hermitages of the Himalayan forests. Ravana, however, carried off Sita while the brothers were pursuing a magic deer. The vulture Jatayu lost his life while endeavoring to rescue Sita as she was borne through the air. Rama formed an alliance with Hanuman, a leader of the monkeys, and received the aid of the hosts of the bears and monkeys—perhaps originally signifying the aboriginal tribes of southern India. Hanuman discovered Sita in the Asoka grove of Ravana's palace gardens. A bridge was thrown across the sea ("Rama's bridge" across the sea from southern India to Ceylon, in fact, a series of coral reefs) and Rama and Lakshmana, aided by Vibhishana, brother of Ravana, and by all the bears and monkeys, but especially Hanuman, laid siege to Lanka, ultimately defeating and slaying Ravana and rescuing Sita, whose purity was attested by an ordeal. All returned to Ayodhya, where the coronation of Rama took place, and Rama established a kingdom of justice and prosperity.

In the picture reproduced (Fig. 12) we see the armies of Rama investing the fortress of Lanka. Rama is seated upon the ground, which is red. Stormy clouds appear in the narrow strip of sky which is seen above the high horizon. The groves are filled with leaping monkeys and black bears—the subtly differentiated velvety blacks are particularly attractive. On the left the golden walls of the fortress rise up into the sky; below the wall there is a garden of fruit trees, and in the foreground the sea, full of strange monsters. Vibhishana is pointing to two captured *rakshasa* (demon) spies. As M. Blochet lately remarked, "Cette peinture est évidemment la reproduction d'une fresque; c'est une œuvre très puissante, digne de cette Iliade d'Extrême Orient, dont les épisodes émouvants illustrent les murs du temple d'Angkor, dans un style tout différent." We recognize truly the characteristic aspect of a mural decoration—the descendant surely of just such an art as is spoken of in the *Uttara Rama Charita* of Bhavabhuti, where a whole scene in the first Act is occupied with a description of a series of *Ramayana* pictures painted on the walls of a quadrangle in the garden of Rama's palace at Ayodhya.

Other pictures in the series show the ten-headed Ravana within his city taking council with his followers; Sita in the Asoka garden, guarded by *rakshasis* (female demons); and battle scenes, in



Fig. 12. *Ramayana, Siege of Lanka*

Ross-Coomaraswamy Collection

Pahari, Jammu, seventeenth century

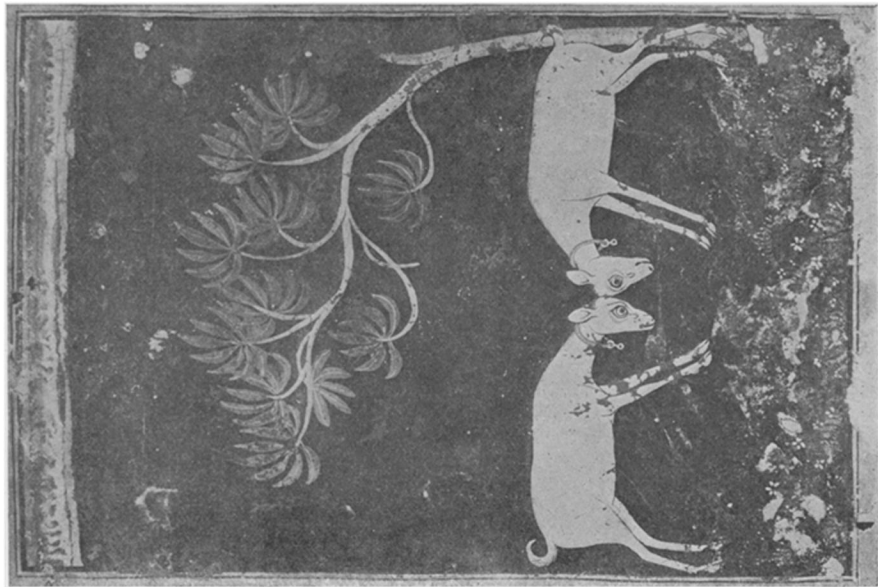


Fig. 13. *Deer Fighting* *Pahari, Jammu, seventeenth century*
Ross-Coomaraswamy Collection



Fig. 14. *Vishnu* *Pahari, Jammu, seventeenth century*
Ross-Coomaraswamy Collection

Fig. 15. *Radha and Krishna**Pahari, Jammu,
seventeenth or eighteenth century*

Ross-Coomaraswamy Collection

several uncolored drawings. Several of the pictures are inscribed at the back with extracts from the *Valmiki Ramayana* in Nagari characters, and in several cases the drawings are annotated with brief inscriptions in Takri character, the vernacular script of the Jammu hills. With the exception of certain Rajasthani cartoons, these are the largest Indian paintings on paper extant. The Ragas and Raginis of the School of Jammu have already been referred to.

The collections further include an incomplete series of sixteen small paintings with short inscriptions and superscriptions in Takri character. The subjects are very varied, including representations of gods, planets, and animals. Of the two examples illustrated here the first (Fig. 13) — a picture of two deer fighting head to head under a tree — is not only of remarkable charm of design and distinguished execution, but of interest as reproducing a motif which occurs already several centuries earlier in a page of the Morgan manuscript of the *Manafi-al Hayawan* (Arabian, A. D. 1295), where it is to be associated with other Indian elements appearing in early Arabic illustration. The coloring is rich without being brilliant. The second picture illus-

trated (Fig. 14), deeply felt, shows the devotee "taking the dust of the feet" of Narayana (Vishnu). The latter, in accordance with Vaishnava convention, is of a dark blue color — the same will be noticed to be the case with the figures of Rama in the *Ramayana* pictures and of Krishna in other Rajput paintings — and wears a yellow *dhoti* and a garland of flowers: the four arms carry the usual attributes, mace, discus, conch, and lotus. The ground is a brilliant red, and only a very narrow strip of cloudy sky appears above the high horizon. The identity of style with that of the *Ramayana* pictures will be obvious.

The Krishna Lila, the themes of which will be discussed in subsequent articles mainly in connection with the school of Kangra, is also dealt with amongst the works of Jammu painters. An example is illustrated in Fig. 15, representing Radha offering betel to Krishna, who is leaning towards her and stands upon a full-blown lotus, the latter a hieratic motif somewhat realistically treated. The archaistic rendering of the fluttering muslin drapery will be remarked. It will also be observed how intently each is gazing at the other. It should be remembered that in this tradition sacred and profane love



Fig. 16. *Raja of Bandralta* *Pahari, seventeenth century*
Ross-Coomaraswamy Collection

are treated as phases of one and the same experience — an intuition of identity. The meeting of eyes is a motif constantly met with in Rajput painting; in Indian rhetoric “love at first sight” is summarily spoken of as *charchasm* (the meeting of four eyes).

Romantic and decorative subjects are also found, a characteristic example representing a lady wringing the water from her hair after her bath. But even pictures such as this have generally a traditional association of ideas of more significance than their traditional theme. In Buddhist art this subject might represent the goddess of Earth wringing from her hair the water of merit when called upon by the Buddha as his witness; in Rajput art it is usually Radha, whose beauty touches Krishna’s heart as he oversees her at her bath, when she wrings from her heavy tresses a “river of pearls.”

We also meet with sets of pictures illustrating the Eight Nayakas, or Heroines in Typical Situations: the collection includes a striking *Abhisarika* of early seventeenth century date, in very strong colors, representing a lady who has fearlessly braved the dangers of a dark and stormy night, and stands on the threshold of her lover’s chamber, he lifting up his hands in amazement.

Paintings of the Jammu School also include a

small proportion of portraits, showing Mughal influence, but having a vigorous local character. A very distinguished example is illustrated in Fig. 16, representing a Raja of Bandralta, one of the smaller Himalayan Rajput states in the Jammu district. The inscription reads: Raja Hataf Bandral. A. K. C.

THE VACATION STORY-HOURS for children, provided by the liberality of a friend of the Museum and carried on under the supervision of the School Committee of the city and of the Boston Social Union, were resumed July 1, and will continue daily during August. The children are brought in special cars from various settlement houses and public playgrounds, and spend about an hour and a half in the Museum under guidance. They first hear an illustrated talk in the Lecture Hall, then are taken to the galleries to see some of the objects mentioned, and after returning to the hall and talking over what they have seen, are dismissed, each with a post card of some object spoken of. It is noteworthy that the interest excited by the excursions, especially among children from the most congested districts of the city, suffices to bring some of them again on foot when it is not their turn to come in the cars.